GUIDE TO THE NR19 SOUTHEAST SALISH FILE

[The NR19 Southeast Salish file contains specific data on a number of Salish speaking peoples who were located in northeastern Washington, northern Idaho, and British Columbia. The peoples included in this file are the Coeur d'Alène (Skitswish), Columbia (including the Chelan, Methow, Sinkaquaiius, Sinkiuse, and Wenatchi or Pisquow), Kalispel, Pend d'Oreille, Semteuse, Lake (Senijextee), Southern Okanagon (Sinkaietk), Spokan, and Sanpoil, the sample, with the Colville and Nespelem.

The Salish language constitutes a distinct language family with no discernible phylum affiliation. The Southeastern Salish spoke several dialects. The Okanagon group included the Okanagon, Sanpoil, Nespelem, Lake, and Colville. The Columbia group included the Columbia, Chelan, Methow, and Wenatchi. The "Flathead group" included in addition to the Flathead proper (who constitute a distinct file unit, NR8), the Kalispel, Spokan, Pend d'Oreille, and Semteuse. The Coeur d'Alène constitute the fourth dialectical group.

Population figures are at great variance and are difficult to estimate. In Teit's time, 1906-1909, the Okanagon estimated that before White contact the Indians numbered about four times their population in the early 20th century. The Okanagon were aboriginally the largest of their group, numbering about 2,500-3,000. The Colville were next at 2,500, the Lake numbered about 2,000, and the Sanpoil were 178. A very rough estimate for all the Southeast Salish in the early 1900's would be about 5,000. If the native estimate is correct, aboriginally they would have numbered about 20,000.

Located in the southern Plateau, the Southeast Salish were subject to influences from both the Northwest Coast and the Plains. Fishing with weirs, collecting berries and roots, and buffalo hunting were the primary subsistence means. There appears to have been variation in the degree to which the horse and a generalized Plains type of culture was adopted among the Southeast Salish. Those groups farthest to the East seem to have been the most effected.

There was a great deal of mixture and intermarriage between the groups constituting the Southeast Salish. According to 3: Cline, in reference to the Southern Okanagon,

> The group is much mixed, both by intermarriage with other peoples for generations and by the inclusion of many individuals of neighboring tribes. Add to all this a high mobility, such that most or all of our informants had resided at one time or another with other peoples. Mixture and intergradation of bands and tribes in this area is clearly ancient and only accelerated by the concentration of interior Washington tribes on the Colville Reservation in the middle of the last century. The upshot is that the ascription of various items of culture to particular bands and tribes is exceptionally difficult. (3: Cline, p. 4-A)

There are seven sources in the NR19 file. None of them give an overall view of the area. 1: Hodge consists of brief entries in the Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico for each of the following: Colville, Kalispel,

Methow, Nespelem, S. Okanagon, Wenatchi, Sanpoil, Lake, Columbia, Coeur d'Alène, and Spokan. 2: Ray is on the Sanpoil and Nespelem and it is considered the basic monograph on the Plateau people. 3: Cline is on the Southern Okanagon. The remaining four sources are all based on the fieldwork of James Teit and were edited by Franz Boas. Each one is a monograph on each of the four dialectical groups. 4: Teit is on the Middle Columbia Salish, 5: Teit is on the Coeur d'Alène, 6: Teit is on the Okanagon group, and 7: Teit is on the "Flathead Group" with data on the Kalispel, Pend d'Oreille, Semteuse, and Spokan. 7: Teit is based primarily on fieldwork done among the Flathead proper, so the researcher should be wary of general statements. All of the sources are based on fieldwork done between 1900 and 1930. Most of the authors used informants who were elderly at the time and could remember back to earlier days. Consequently much of the material in the file is historical in nature and attempts to reconstruct life in the 19th century. The NR19 file deals with somewhat diverse groups and the spatial focus should be well noted. The file was processed in 1953-1956 and 1975.]